LIFE IN THE MALAY KAMPONGS OF KUCHING, FIFTY YEARS AGO

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ABDULLAH SALLEH
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Institute of East Asian Studies
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First Edition

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♦ Chinese
♦ Bidayu
♦ Iban

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1 E. R. Leach Soc
2 H. S. Morris Roy
3 T'ien Ju-K'ang
4 W. R. Geddes Stationery Office
5 J. D. Freeman Roy
INTRODUCTION

Historically the Malay community played a pivotal role in Sarawak. Under the Brooke regime local civil servants were drawn primarily not just from the Malay community, but from its aristocracy, the perabangan.

Yet the study of the Malay community has been severely neglected. As an indication, when the Institute of East Asian Studies compiled its first bibliographies of published works, a listing of studies on the Orang Ulu needed 31 pages, that on the Iban and Bidayuh communities some 26 pages, but for the Malay, Melanau and Kedayan together only 16 pages were needed. Included within the eight pages of publications specifically on the Malay community, are a number of important studies, including those written by Sanib Said and Maimunah Daud. However, the number of scholars who have published on the Sarawak Malay community over the past fifty years is very limited.

Following the Cession of Sarawak to the British Crown, the Colonial Office commissioned academic studies of each community. This closely followed the recommendations of Prof. E. R. Leach in his report on the possibilities of a social economic survey of Sarawak1.

The following studies were all completed and published in the early 1950s, and are a baseline from which to understand many of the changes that have subsequently impacted upon each of the largest ethnically defined communities of Sarawak.

- Melanau by Dr. Stephen Morris2
- Chinese by Dr. T'ien Ju Kang3
- Bidayuh by Dr. Bill Geddes4
- Iban by Dr. Derek Freeman5

What were conspicuously absent were contemporary insights into the Malay communities of Sarawak, and several reasons suggest themselves. One explanation was that Mr. Tom Harrisson, then Curator of the Sarawak Museum, took upon himself the writing of the study on the Malay community. But his work suffered a number of delays, and was not

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finally published until 1970⁶. By then it referred generally to the period from 1947 to the 1960s, and had undergone heavy revisions and rearrangements⁷. The Harrisson study was critiqued as voluminous rather than analytical, even though its length had already been pruned back from well over 1,000 pages.

Under sponsorship of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, various students carried out studies which were then incorporated as part of the material used by Tom Harrisson, but not in a systematic and identifiable form. In his book Harrisson made a passing reference to Professor G. H. Dobby and his students “who helped in the initial stages of the enquiry”, and named Dr. B. W. Hodder, then a junior lecturer under Professor Dobby. However the original reports that were written seem to have been lost with the passage of time, and it is those contemporary reports that give the flavour and texture of Malay Kampung life at the time.

A second reason related to politics. Given the tension within the Malay community regarding the Cession of Sarawak to the British Crown, it is understandable that outside researchers would not be so welcome to pursue their enquiries, particularly after the assassination of the second British Governor, and the subsequent execution of several of those implicated in his killing.

Upon first arriving in Sarawak as a student in 1962, I was privileged to have been lent the fourth carbon copy of a report by A. Zainal Abidin and Abdullah Salleh entitled A Geographical Study of Kuching Malay Kampungs. This was duly copied and filed, my not fully appreciating its value and rarity. Only when the Malay Cultural Foundation endowed the Chair of Nusantara Studies, and the IEAS organized a “state of the art” workshop on Malay studies⁹, did I start to comprehend the value of those pages. Then began a search to find the authors and other reports in the series of studies. None could be located at the University of Malaya, the University of Singapore, or in the Sarawak Museum. A study of Santubong, the Malay Fishing Village, was completed in 1952 by the late Che’ Mansor Othman. After graduation, Che’ Mansor joined the education service, entered politics and rose to become Menteri Besar of Negeri Sembilan. Subsequently, he became a senior executive of the Shell Company of Malaysia. We remain keen to locate a copy of that study. Che’ Mansor worked very closely with Professor Dobby, who gave him every encouragement in his work.

In 1953 two young students of the Department of Geography at the University of Malaya, which was then located in Singapore, came to Sarawak to research and write this study. Upon first arriving in Sarawak as a student in 1962, I was privileged to have been lent the fourth carbon copy of a report by A. Zainal Abidin and Abdullah Salleh entitled A Geographical Study of Kuching Malay Kampungs. This was duly copied and filed, my not fully appreciating its value and rarity. Only when the Malay Cultural Foundation endowed the Chair of Nusantara Studies, and the IEAS organized a “state of the art” workshop on Malay studies⁹, did I start to comprehend the value of those pages. Then began a search to find the authors and other reports in the series of studies. None could be located at the University of Malaya, the University of Singapore, or in the Sarawak Museum. A study of Santubong, the Malay Fishing Village, was completed in 1952 by the late Che’ Mansor Othman. After graduation, Che’ Mansor joined the education service, entered politics and rose to become Menteri Besar of Negeri Sembilan. Subsequently, he became a senior executive of the Shell Company of Malaysia. We remain keen to locate a copy of that study. Che’ Mansor worked very closely with Professor Dobby, who gave him every encouragement in his work.

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⁷ Ibid p. 36
⁸ E. R. Leach made the comment, in his preface to Dr. Freeman’s report [p. iii], “in 1947 a sociological study of the Malay community would have been politically inopportune”. How much more so after the events of 1949!
⁹ The Nusantara Workshop was held from 5-6 July 1999. Papers were given by Dr. Nobaru Ishikawa [Kyoto University] on the Telok Melano community of Sarawak Malays, Prof. James Collins [UKM] on the Sarawak Malay language, En. Sarib Said [Sarawak Museum] on the linkages between the Malay communities of Kuching and Brunei, Prof. Wan Zawawi on research agendas for Sarawak Malay Studies, Pengiran Dr. Hj. Abu Bakar Pg. Hj. Saifudin [Universiti Brunei Darussalam] on the Kedayan community in Brunei, Dr. Awang Hasmadi Awang Mois [UKM] on the nature and origin of the Sarawak Malay and Prof. Shamsul Amri Baharudin [UKM] on Malay world studies.
this study. Unfortunately that Department retained no copy, but was able to provide an address for one of the authors, Abdullah Salleh. It was such a pleasant surprise to receive a prompt response from Tan Sri Dato’ Abdullah bin Mohd Salleh, who did not himself have a copy, but was enthusiastic to have the report published. Then began the task of re-typing, checking and digitally enhancing all of the maps and diagrams that had been included in the original report. Given the poor condition of the copy of the old carbon copy, I would like to express our grateful appreciation for the professional expertise of Cik D Jennifer Franklin, who carefully typed the whole manuscript, her first major task as a new staff member of the Institute of East Asian Studies. Cik Siti Zuraida, the Assistant Publishing Officer of the IFAS, painstakingly checked the text and enhanced all the diagrams that had been scanned from the original. Those maps and diagrams had been drawn by hand, and it was deemed important to maintain their original integrity. Sadly, none of the photographs in the original report had been affixed to the fourth carbon copy, so reference to each of those illustrations has been deleted from the text. If ever the original thesis is discovered, those photographs would be a wonderful addition to our knowledge and understanding.

The two authors of this monograph, Ahmad Zainal Abidin and Abdullah Salleh, came from the intellectual elite of the Malay community. Both were the sons of teachers. The great-grandfather, grandfather and father of Abdullah Salleh were all teachers. His father was Headmaster of a Malay School in Malacca; Ahmad Zainal’s father was one of the Education Department’s Inspectorate, an organizer of schools. The uncle of Ahmad Zainal was none other than the famous “Zaaba”, Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad, known throughout the region for his writing. “Zaaba” became the Professor of Malay Studies in Singapore. Abdullah Salleh told how his father was absolutely determined that his children had the opportunity to obtain an English as well as a Malay language education.\footnote{Tan Sri Abdullah told how his uncle received an English language education, and went on to become a Co-operatives Officer, drawing a salary many times that received by a Headmaster of a Malay School. Tan Sri went on to add his comment on the economic worth of Malay education at that time in history: "Those who went to Malay Schools, the best they could be was to become a teacher. Otherwise they were good only as office boys or lowly ranked government jobs as labourers or Division IV in the Government Service." [Interview, Kuala Lumpur, May 6, 2002]}

The late Ahmad Zainal Abidin was born in 1925 in Kuala Lumpur, and married the daughter of Dato’ Syed Abdul Kadir, the Menteri Besar of Johore. After further study at the London School of Economics, he entered the Malayan Civil Service, transferring to the new Foreign Service of the Federation of Malaya soon after independence. He represented Malaysia in London, Paris, Hanoi, Rabat, and Moscow, and was Ambassador to Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey in 1971-72, before his premature demise.

Tan Sri Dato’ Abdullah Mohd Salleh was born in Malacca, in 1926, and educated at High School, Malacca before he joined the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, prior to enrolling at the University of Malaya in Singapore. There was much sickness in his family. As a child he had to struggle to overcome illnesses that had taken the lives of all his siblings, and his mother too. Given the history of illness, he resolved to become a doctor. However, his own medical condition, water on the lung, delayed
his schooling for two years. For that reason he was older than his contemporaries when he entered University on a scholarship awarded by the Johore Government.

The fieldwork and writing of this report took place after completion of his second year of study at the University of Malaya. Ahmad Zainal, his co-author, had already finished his courses of study, and needed to complete the honours research report. Being a scholarship recipient, upon graduation Abdullah Salleh joined the Johore Civil Service [1955], transferring to the Malayan Civil Service the following year. His postings included Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Private Secretary to Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. In that position he had close access to Tun Razak, then Deputy Prime Minister.

After the events of May 1969, Tan Sri Abdullah was placed in several quite pivotal positions, what were also known as “hot spots”. That year he was seconded to help set up Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and was Registrar until 1972, and appointed Chairman of the University Council in 1975. From 1972 to 1974, he served as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, a key Ministry for Prime Minister Razak. Then followed two years as Director-General of the Public Service Department, after which he was appointed the Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia and Head of the Civil Service, from 1976 to 1978. He retired from Government Service at the end of 1978, to become the Chairman and CEO of Petronas through to 1984, and from 1984 to 1988 was Petronas President and Chief Executive. Subsequently he served as Chairman of the Tun Razak Foundation, and Pro-Chancellor of UKM from 1987 until the present.

The Universiti Malaysia Sarawak is privileged to be able to publish this report, writing that captures the flavour of the life of the Malay kampong people across river from Kuching some fifty years ago. The report is important in itself, and is also a challenge to our present day students to read the quality of an undergraduate academic exercise, researched and written by two young Malay boys who were visiting Sarawak for the first time. It is a challenge to see what two motivated and dedicated students of human society could do, in a period of just three months. The time allocated was limited by the requirement that Abdullah Salleh return to Singapore for the start of the new academic year, and the final report be submitted for Ahmad Zainal’s graduation.

The Institute of East Asian Studies is charged with facilitating a range of interdisciplinary programs and activities to advance a better understanding of Borneo, in a regional perspective. The Malay Cultural Foundation has generously endowed the Chair of Nusantara Studies at the Institute. We are proud that this monograph is an important contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the Malay community in Sarawak.

Professor Michael Leigh
Director, Institute of East Asian Studies
University Malaysia Sarawak
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS BY THE AUTHORS

We are grateful to Professor E.H.G. Dobby, Professor of Geography in the University of Malaya, Singapore, and Mr. Tom Harrisson, D.S.O. Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Sarawak Museum, for giving us the opportunity of staying in Kuching for more than two and a half months to write the foregoing report. We are indebted to Mr. B.W. Hodder, Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Geography, University of Malaya, for spending some six weeks with us in Kuching and guiding us in our fieldwork. He also kept in close touch with us during the remainder of the fieldwork and gave valuable advice and assistance in the writing-up phase of the work.

The Acting Curator of the Sarawak Museum, Mr. G. E. Wilfurd of the Sarawak Geological Survey Department, was most helpful at all stages of the fieldwork and was particularly invaluable as a source of information of a physiographical nature. Fig. 2 is based mainly upon his own work in the field. The Acting Curator also took a great interest in the final drawing of maps and diagrams; they were drawn, under his supervision, by Mr. Lett bin Ali, Junior Technical Assistant at the Geological Survey Department.

We wish also to record our gratitude to the Secretary for Malay Affairs, The Dato Bandar, O.B.E., for encouragement and advice so freely given and for introducing us to the kampong headman, thereby greatly smoothing our work in the field. Special mention must also be made of Mr. Hurley, of the Lands and Survey Department, who not only undertook the photostating but also gave us much useful information on numerous topics connected with our work and kindly allowed us the facilities of the department, particularly in the use of air photographs.

The Principal and Vice-Principal of Batu Lintang Boys’ School kindly allowed fourteen of their boys to help us in the questionnaire work for a fortnight. We are must grateful to these boys, without whose help, careful and reliable as it was, we should have found it difficult to complete the questionnaire at every one of the houses in thirteen kampongs. At one period in the fieldwork we considered using some sampling method, but the help of the Batu Lintang Boys made this unnecessary.

Finally our thanks are due to numerous Government Departments and private persons, all of whom gave us encouragement and help, and to those, including those mentioned above, who entertained us and made our stay in Kuching so pleasant.
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(i) Scope of the Research

This research was undertaken during the vacation period of the writer, Abdullah Mohd. Misran and financed by the University of Malaya in 1952 and 1953. The Malay Kampongs of Kuching, though stretch across the eastern limits of the city, are extensive in the north and south suburbs, and are comparable to the thick urban areas elsewhere.

(ii) Use of Material

Some information available through these kampungs, though not always accurate, is included here. Melanipedeans are the majority of the Malay population and are pedantic.

(iii) The General Total

Though a very painstaking and interesting effort was made to achieve an end, objective results were not achieved. The fieldwork was...

1 M. V. Del Tute: A R.
2 J. L. Noakes: A R.
3 The fieldwork was...
KUCHING MALAY KAMPONGS

INTRODUCTION

(i) Scope of the Study

This report is based upon some of the fieldwork carried out during the summer vacation, 1953, by A. Zainal Abidin, geography honours degree student, and Abdullah Salleh, an undergraduate in his final year. The work forms part of the Malay Socio-Economic Survey being undertaken by the Sarawak Museum and financed by the Colonial Development and Welfare fund. During the summer of 1952 a similar survey was carried out by three other geographers from the University of Malaya; they worked at Santubong - a Malay fishing village near the mouth of the Santubong River in Sarawak.

The Malay Kampongs studied here lie mainly within the Kuching Municipality and stretch along the northern, left bank of the Sarawak River for about six miles. There are extensive Malay Kampong and other Malay residential areas of a definitely suburban character within the municipal boundaries south of river. Though some comparisons are drawn with these latter areas, the fieldwork was confined mainly to the thirteen kampongs along the northern bank (Fig. 1).

(ii) Use of the word 'Malay'

Some initial doubt was felt about use of the word ‘Malay’ to describe the people of these kampongs. In accordance with the 1947 Census of Malaya¹ it would be more accurate to call them ‘Malaysian’. This would dispel difficulties of origin and include such elements as the Javanese and Boyanese. But it would also embrace the Melanaus and Dyaks. ‘Malays’, as defined by Noakes², certainly form the large majority of the people living in the kampongs along the northern bank. It would be pedantic to call them anything else in this context.

(iii) The Geographical Approach

Though the emphasis is necessarily upon social and economic facts, this report is written by geographers rather than sociologists or economists. Our main concern and interest is with the interaction between man and his environment. We have endeavoured to collect facts and interpret them geographically in as balanced and objective as manner as possible. Certain social and economic applications inevitably emerge, but this report is essentially and primarily a geographical document³.

******

³ The fieldwork was begun on the 28th June 1953, and the Report completed on October 3rd, 1953.
Note on the Maps and Diagrams.

There are no detailed or accurate maps of the areas available even on a scale of one inch to the mile; no survey adequate to enable maps to be drawn has yet been undertaken. In particular, the large folding map (Fig. 22) had to be drawn, without any suitable base map, almost wholly in the field. Although we believe these maps to be sufficiently accurate for most purposes, they obviously cannot have the degree of accuracy possible in a properly surveyed area.

(i) Geomo

The most striking feature of the area (Fig. 2.2) is the significant alluvial sediments which descend from the north. The river flows generally from west to east. The most important feature is the alluvial plain, which is characterized by a series of broad terraces and includes the Kampong Village.

The river flows generally from west to east. The most important feature is the alluvial plain, which is characterized by a series of broad terraces.

The alluvial sediments vary in thickness, and the river responds in a similar way. In general, the river is characterized by a series of broad terraces, and the alluvial sediments vary in thickness. However, the river responds in a similar way, and the alluvial sediments vary in thickness. In general, the river is characterized by a series of broad terraces, and the alluvial sediments vary in thickness. However, the river responds in a similar way. The Sarawak River is characterized by a series of broad terraces, and the alluvial sediments vary in thickness. However, the river responds in a similar way.

The lowland area of the Sarawak River is characterized by a series of broad terraces, and the alluvial sediments vary in thickness. However, the river responds in a similar way.

4 G. E. Wilfert, "G.
CHAPTER 1
THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

(i) Geomorphology

The most striking site value of Kuching Town is its situation at a point where two ridges of relatively high land, well above flood level, face each other across the Sarawak River (Fig. 2.) Both above and below Kuching the land is low and swampy; there is no significant settlement at all on the 18 miles of river below Kuching and above the capital one must travel 9 miles before reaching the small town of Batu Kawa.

The river at Kuching has almost certainly been superimposed, resulting in a gorge-like feature through which the water normally flows very rapidly. However, the bridge-point characteristics of the site are not important for there has never been any great incentive to north-south movement.

The Malay kampongs discussed in this report are confined mainly to the swampy alluvial north bank of the river both upstream and downstream from Astana Hill. However, as Fig. 2 indicates, the swampy alluvial characteristics are not typical of the western half of the downstream section which is penetrated by low hills reaching southwards and indeed at one place meeting the river along a frontage of over a quarter of a mile. Further, there are Malay kampongs sited actually on the eastern and western flanks of Astana Hill. The western, upstream section of the kampongs contains two small and isolated hill features (Figs. 2), and mention must also be made of a small hill well downstream at Kampong Bintawa Batu, isolated from the extreme eastern end of the kampong strip by a one and a quarter mile stretch of river. (Fig. 2)

Virtually all these hill areas are of high-level alluvium, resting unconformably upon steeply dipping sedimentary rocks comprising sandstones and shales. The high-level alluvium, probably of quaternary age, is coarse sand and gravel. The underlying sedimentary rocks, on the other hand, consist of sandstone and shale alternations, probably of Permo-Carboniferous age. The sandstone weathers to a plastic sandy clay, varies in colour from white to yellow and may have an orange tinge.

The low-lying areas are covered with recent alluvium, which extends inland from the Sarawak River, more particularly along the numerous small tributaries. However, those sections of the Malay kampongs, which are shown in Fig. 2 as lying on this alluvium, are usually slightly raised above mean high tide level. The typical cross-section of these villages, especially in the downstream section, is that of a low, broad hill, about 50 feet wide and up to 10 feet or so high. This feature is very probably a levee, formed by the regular and often serious flooding at high tides during the wettest parts of the year. As one nears the great loop of the river to the east, however, this levee disappears and here the land is clearly extending into the river, a process in which it is aided by the rapid growth of the riverside swamp vegetation.

Much of this northern bank is experiencing river erosion.

This probably takes place only during floods and storms when sub-aerial erosion on the bank itself assists the erosional processes. During normal times the river appears to be in equilibrium with its bank but some importance may be attached to three factors. These are the concavity of the banks in question, the construction or concrete wharves along the opposite bank, and the increase in the speed of the water flow as it is forced through the gorge-like feature immediately above the downstream kampong section.

(iii) Climate

In this area the climate is tropical, changing from the wettest to the dry season. The calmer season is from the end of May to the end of September.

Broadly speaking the climate is tropical, but there are two distinct seasons, the wettest is from the end of May to the end of September (Fig. 3a and 3b). During the dry season the temperature is considerably lower and the land more arid. During this season the effects of the monsoon are felt throughout any stretch of this river, whether it be near to the coast or far inland.

During the monsoon season there is less violence to the river. As during the low range the river is less violent, so during the drier season the river is less violent. But of particular importance is the effect of the micro-climate of the river. Much of this river flows through a narrow gorge, the water temperature is maintained by air from above and below the water. The height of the water is maintained by the water level of the main river and the water is clear and pliable during this season.

5 See 'Santubong R
Whatever the precise causes of the erosion found taking place on portions of the north bank, numerous instances of its effects on settlement were noted. One Malay in Kampong Pulau states that his house, built 22 feet from the bank just 30 years ago, is now less than 7 feet away the water's edge. Several Malays intend to move their houses inland a little in the same kampong for the same reason. Again, in Kampong Tupong Ulu, where the river curve is very concave, many cases of erosion were noted.

One important feature along the north bank of the Sarawak River is the presence of numerous creeks and distributaries, which are directly under tidal influences. These streams, which give their names to the various kampongs, are mainly short and indeterminate, and in the many cases disappear into the swamps in the immediate hinterland. Though only slightly higher than the Sarawak River, they dry up during low tide. Inundation of the hinterland swamps during the high tides assists the process of silting within these streams.

(ii) Climate

In this area the amount of rainfall is typically the main criterion for determining seasons; from the point of view of the kampong dwellers the wetter, stormier season and the drier, calmer season are facts of very great significance in their lives.

Broadly speaking, the landas lasts from November to March, the tedoh from May to September; October and April may be conveniently looked upon as 'transitional' months (Fig. 3a). During the landas the heaviest and most sustained rainfall occurs, the winds are often violent and from a predominantly north-east direction, and the mean temperatures rather lower than during the tedoh (Fig. 4). However, the ekor duyung (or the landas storms), which frequently occur in late December and have such devastating effects on fishing activities in Santubong and rice-fields of Pasir Pandak, never reach, in any strength, the string of kampong at Kuching though they are only about 18 miles away from the coast.

During the tedoh the rainfall is less and droughts up to 3 weeks may occur, winds are less violent and southerly or southwesterly, and temperatures reach their highest peaks. During the tedoh, too, extreme maximum and minimum temperatures show a greater range than during the landas. The diurnal range of temperature, in fact, is greater during the drier season (Fig. 4). Mean relative humidity, it will be observed, is rarely over 70% during the tedoh. (Fig. 3b).

But of perhaps more immediate human significance than these climatic abstractions are micro-climatic observations. The Malay kampongs on the north bank of the river are well placed during the tedoh when the south or southwesterly breeze blows in over the river. As Table 1, inadequate though it is, shows, this may affect the sun and shade air temperatures slightly, for readings taken on opposite banks of the river gave measurable differences in this respect. The effect on the body temperature, however, though not

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Life in The Malay Kampongs of Kuching, Fifty Years Ago

capable by us of quantitative expression, was most marked on the hottest days when this breeze could be felt. The effects of the landas winds on this inland area are lessened not only by the inland position of Kuching, but also by the local protection afforded the Malay kampong by the tall swamp and other vegetation immediately to the north.

Table 1: Air Temperatures 4th August.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Shade 'F</th>
<th>Sun 'F</th>
<th>Breeze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.50 p.m. North Bank (Kg. Bintawa)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>Very Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45 p.m. South Bank opposite</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>Very Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50 p.m. North Bank (Kg. Buah)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.55 p.m. South Bank (Blacksmiths)</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.50 a.m. On Board Rajah Brooke in River</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Slight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further point might be made that the position of these Malay Kampong, strung along the bank of the river, means that on hot calm days the kampong are influenced by land-river breezes, initiated by differential heating of the air.

The height of the river, so important a feature in the settlement geography of these kampong, some of which are flooded to some extent every day, is of course directly affected by seasonal and local variations in the rainfall as well as by the tidal changes. During the landas the level of the water at high tide is sometimes more than five feet higher than the corresponding tide during the tedoh. At Santubong, the chief importance of seasonal weather change lies in the severity of the local winds and storms and their effects especially on fishing activities. In the question of river height at Kuching, however, average rainfall conditions for the whole river basin apply more nearly and with a different emphasis. The height of the river is affected partly by the rainfall over any part of the basin of the Sarawak River.

(iii) Vegetation and Soils

From what has already been said, it will be apparent that the kampong are either on low swampy ground fringing the river or on slightly higher land, free from flooding for most of the year. In the first type the soils are black and peaty but the important fertility factor is not so much the soil itself as the position of the water table; water lies almost always at the surface. Bandong, a coarse grass, is most common in these Malay compounds where the richer, larger species have been cleared. Immediately inland from the compound, however, and fringing the river and stream quite often, is a typical river mangrove - including nipah palm (Nipah fruticans), rasoh (a species of pandanus) and podada (Sonneratia sp.). Where the land is rather higher, however, the typical vegetation is a poor, stunted secondary growth locally known as jerami or temuda. This is best seen at Kampong Panglima Seman where the hill area fronts on to the river. Here the hill, small though it is, is too steep and rough for settlement so that the jerami is relatively undisturbed.

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6 The tidal are semi-diurnal here.

7 Temuda is an Iban term for secondary growth. Jerami is in more common use among the Kuching Malays and is roughly equivalent in meaning to the Malayan Belukar.
In these portions of the kampong area, which are not too swampy, the more common types of fruit trees are found in abundance. Coconuts are particularly numerous, but banana and areca trees, rubber and *lallang* or *bundong* all combine to give a mixed land use, richer and more varied than that on the low swampy areas. However, in places the vegetation has been largely cleared and only a poor *lallang* and *resam* is found; this is particularly the case around the Astana and in Kampong Lintang inland away from the constantly waterlogged areas.

In places where the ground is high enough above high tide level to be used for rubber smallholding, the water table is nevertheless very near the surface. The rubber shows a remarkable lateral growth of roots. It is likely that in these areas where peat predominates, the lateral roots above the ground are caused by the shrinkage of the peaty...
layer as a result of recent attempts at artificial drainage. Another possible factor is the decomposition of the peat, which may shrink or drain away, leaving the roots to hang above the surface of the ground. They may also appear at the surface simply in order to breathe, for there is a serious lack of aeration in the soil.

Fig. 5 shows diagrammatically the vegetation zones in three kampongs.

(iv) Summary

The environmental opportunities presented in the Malay Kampongs are, it is clear, very limited. The houses stretch along the river in a narrow zone varying from a few yards to over one hundred yards in width, confined between the river and swamp or rubber inland. There are frequent small streams or creaks cutting through the kampong area. Flooding is a serious and ever-present problem in most of the thirteen kampongs, the soil is always poor and it is difficult to construct wells for drinking water. Further, the kampongs are isolated in many ways from the main part of Kuching across the river and they have no immediate hinterland except, in most cases, just swamp or poor rubber. The remainder of this report will be concerned with the people of this kampong, and how they have controlled and adapted themselves to this difficult environment.
Figure 5: Diagram of Vegetation Zones in Kampong Sinjan, Pulau and Bintawa
CHAPTER 2
THE POPULATION

(i) Numbers, Composition and Distribution

The total population of the Malay Kampongs, according to our census, was 6,714. Table 2 gives an analysis of this population.

Table 2: Population by Kampongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kampong</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bintawa</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulau</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semarang</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penglima Seman</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surabaya</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gersik</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyan</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astana</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungai Bedil</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lintang</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjong</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinjan</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupong</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Malays)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,633</td>
<td>1,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non-Malays)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>2,262</td>
<td>2,599</td>
<td>6,714</td>
<td>1,203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, even excluding Kampongs Bintawa and Tupong, which are both outside the Municipal limits, these north bank kampongs contain about one third of the total Malays in Kuching Municipality.8

The Kampongs are located on land reserved specifically for the Malays. Racial homogeneity of the population is therefore to be expected, though there are a few Melanaus, Filipinos and Dyaks. Malays, as the following extract shows, form easily the second most important indigenous cultural group in Sarawak (1947).

Table 3: Indigenous groups in Sarawak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sea Dyak</td>
<td>190,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malays</td>
<td>97,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Dyak</td>
<td>42,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanaus</td>
<td>35,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indigenous</td>
<td>29,867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 There were 13,992 Malays in Kuching in 1947, according to the Census of that year.
But the Malay as such are by no means ethnically homogeneous. Their origin is obscure and though a few stated definitely to have originated in Malaya, Sumatra or Java, for instance, the majority call themselves simply ‘Malay’, ‘Sarawakians’ or ‘Sarawak Malay’, often thereby meaning Malays from the Kuching district. However, all interest in differences of origin are from our point of view purely academic. There are no disintegrating tendencies based on ethnic differences in this wholly Muslim community. Only one case of inter-marriage between members of different cultural group was recorded - the marriage of a Malay woman to an Indian Muslim in Kampong Lintang. On the other hand, in Kuching south of the river, this kind of intermarriage is not uncommon.

Children and a few adults were noted, however, who although calling themselves ‘Malay’ were clearly wholly or partly Chinese physically. The adoption by Malay families of Chinese children, particularly girls, is a common practice, even among Malays with children of their own. The adopted child receives no invidious treatment, and is invariably Muslim. Exactly why such adoption is so common it is difficult to decide satisfactorily on the basis of our short period of work in these kampongs. The only widely expressed and openly accepted reason is the desire of those possessing no children at all to own them or of those families in which the children are all boys to possess a girl. This certainly fits in with the practice of disposing of the girls rather than the boys by Chinese who feel that their economic position does not warrant the keeping of an extra girl. There is also the fear by Malay families in which all the children are boys, that when the sons follow the practice among the Malays of living with their in-laws after marriage, the parents will be deprived of their sons who are income earners and capable of looking after them when they are old or sick. A daughter means a potential son-in-law in one’s house.

However, Chinese baby girls are taken by some Malay families even though they already possess several children, including girls. The reasons for this kind of adoption are certainly partly explicable in terms of differences between Chinese and Malay social and economic philosophies. Some reasons, never expressed however by the Malay himself, may be unpopular if openly admitted though generally and tacitly held. The light colouring and more delicate features of the Chinese girls are, we think, factors of some characteris1importance in many cases, making the child probably more marriageable in a community with more females than males, and thereby incidentally attracting a son-in-law into the house. In one house in a downstream kampong a large number of people were found to be visiting the household to see a small baby Chinese girl who had just been purchased for $50 by the Malays. The villagers certainly appeared to be most interested in whether the colouring and general features of the child made it a good bargain.

The excess of females over males in these kampongs cannot be stated quantitatively except in so far as the adult population is concerned; children were not enumerated by sex. But there can be no doubt about the sex ratio being in the favour of the females. The adult sex ratio for all the kampongs combined, according to our figures, is 821 males to 1,000 females of the pertinent age group. The distribution of sex conforms to that of the present population of the whole area where the majority of the population is Muslim and which drink and eat the same food as the Muslims. However, in the downstream area governed by the Dyal settlement there is a higher proportion of males than females, which is more uncommon. The balance of the sexes there is no doubt a function of the migration of females, namely a migration of young girls to the towns and villages.

(ii) Migration

The balance of the sexes is thus a function of migration and of change in the social and economic conditions of the population. There is a migration of females to the towns and villages which has to be accounted for.

The number of persons per race and size of house.

9 The 1947 Census gives the adult sex ratio for the kampongs.
10 Total area of the kampong.
11 The number of persons per race and size of house.
The Population

The age and sex pyramid illustrates this for the Malays of Kuching (Fig. 6).

The distributional pattern of the population in the kampongs is shown in two forms - by settlement units (Fig. 8) and by population of the kampongs (Fig. 7). It is clear that the population generally tends to increase in numbers and density towards the Astana Hill area kampongs. This marked increase in density towards the Astana is without doubt governed by such factor as proximity to the core zone of Kuching, the greater ease with which drinking water can be obtained there and most probably the comparatively greater social prestige, which these kampongs enjoy.

However, like the bald statement that the whole kampong area - upstream and downstream sections - has a population density of 24 per acre, such facts have a restricted value in this instance for two main reasons. In the first place, the total area includes swamps, stream and land so deeply flooded or so steep as to make settlement there impossible. Second, density per unit of floor space seems to be more important here than density of population per acre (Fig. 9). It is most significant, for instance, that while the housing density and population density increase in both upstream and downstream sections towards the Astana Hill, the floor space density decreases in the same direction.

The pattern of population in the kampongs is very similar to that of settlement units - namely a more linear pattern in the extreme east and west, gradually merging into a more concentrated and compact pattern towards the centre near the Astana. The pattern also shows a clear concentration near and along the edge of the Sarawak River.

(ii) Migration

The balance of migration, live births and deaths are the only factors that can directly influence population numbers. The vast array of so-called ‘fundamental’ factors can only operate the agency of these three functions. As far as external migration is concerned, there is very little either way in these kampongs nowadays; permanency is a characteristic feature of the population.

Immigration into these kampongs was greatest 25-30 years ago, and was from coastal towns and villages, notably Mukah, Sibu, Matu, Saribas, Nonok, Oya, and from Brunei. The movement, according to the people themselves, took place during and largely as a result of the rubber boom here in the 1920’s. With regard to emigration, the main reason has been to find employment in other places or to live with relatives. The coastal areas are more favourable to farming and most emigration has taken place towards Saratok,

9 The 1947 Census gives a sex ratio (all ages) for Kuching Malays of 938 males to 1,000 females.
10 Total area of the kampong is approximately 276 acres; total population is 6,663. The Malay Kampong area was calculated by planimeter. The area settled by the Dyaks in Kampong Astana covers a further 8.45 acres.
11 The number of persons per occupied house (6.5) is less than that for the whole of Kuching Municipality - 9.3 in 1947. In view of differences in race and size of house, however, such a comparison means very little.
Sibu, Miri, Matu, Sejinkat, Mukah, Sarikei, Bintulu, and Brunei - in other words, the same coastal areas from which most of the immigrants originate. There were, however, some cases noted of migration to other parts of Sarawak initiated by the Government, which has transferred people attached to government service, although from the point of view of numbers involved they are insignificant. Moreover, it is difficult to say whether such transfers involve permanent or temporary migrations. Again, the population figures as enumerated for the kampongs include those people whose occupations involve their staying away from home for the greater part of their time, returning at the most once or twice a month.

Figure 6: Malays in Kuching (1947)
(Data from 1947 Census Report)